



# I MHG NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2006

## IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM THE COMMANDING OFFICER

Many of you have faced the realities of deployment before. For some of our spouses, this will be the first time to be separated from their loved ones for an extended period of time. Deployments are never easy no matter how many you've been through. Communication may be difficult, and the spouse remaining behind must assume many roles. This may be particularly difficult for those of you with small children or those spouses who are pregnant.

In an age where we are all used to cell phones and e-mails/instant messages, the lack of immediate contact with your loved one may be the most difficult factor to deal with after your loved one deploys. You do have someone who can be there to help you in locating resources that can assist you and to be your communication link with the command. That person is your Key Volunteer (KV).

The Key Volunteer Network (KVN) is the link between the command and the families. KVs are notified on a regular basis as to what is happening out in the field and to pass important information back to the spouses at home. The KV is also trained to know what resources are available locally and to pass that information on to you.

The KVN is not a social club, a gossip fest, or spouses who are trying to interfere with your life. The KVN is composed of spouses from all units and all ranks. They must attend special training classes to become KVs and must adhere to basic principles of professionalism, confidentiality, and competence. Only after going through the required training are they appointed by the Commanding Officer to become KVs. The KVN has coordinators who go through additional training to become Key Volunteer Coordinators (KVCs).

The KVCs are the primary link to the command. They pass information to the KVs who, in turn, pass the information to spouses through phone calls and/or e-mails. KVs typically will contact you at least once a month.

If there is important information to be passed, they will contact you as soon as possible. Routine information may be passed to you in the form of an e-mail or printed in this newsletter.

It is important that you stay in touch with your KV. Please let her/him know immediately if you are planning to go back home, to move, to change your phone number/e-mail account, or any other method used to stay in touch. In the event that important information needs to get to families quickly, it is vital that your KV have the correct information to save precious minutes or hours in contacting you.

On the back page of this newsletter is a listing of all KVs for both the Command Element and the I MEF Headquarters Group plus the phone number for the Family Readiness Officer. The page also contains a section for important information as to other family members, children, pets, and household matters. Please fill that page out and put it in a prominent location such as your refrigerator.

If you have a trusted friend or neighbor who may also be a point of contact, pass on a copy of the back page to them as well. You will have the benefit of knowing that your children, pets, and other household matters are being taken care of, leaving you the peace of mind to handle whatever emergency arises.

You will note that there are gaps in our KV ranks. Some of our sections do not have KVs and I am asking spouses to consider joining our KVN. Training classes are convenient, there are once a month meetings, childcare is provided, expenses are covered, and most importantly, you will become part of a network of caring spouses just like yourself.

A final note- take care of each other. Many of your friends and neighbors will also have deployed spouses. A phone call, sharing childcare and household chores, getting together for coffee or lunch, and other mutual assistance can help ease the challenges.

**Semper Fi,  
LtCol Thomas Ward**

## **MOTO MAIL: When E-mails are Non-Existent and Traditional Mail Service May Take Weeks**

Excerpts Reprinted from American Forces Press Service, article by Donna Miles  
WASHINGTON, Jan. 6, 2006 - In the age of e-mail, podcasts and blogs, it's easier than ever before for deployed troops to stay in contact with their friends and loved ones at home. But many say none of these high-tech communications can compete with an old-fashioned card or letter they can tuck away in a pocket or backpack and reread anytime, anywhere, until it's faded and dog-eared.

A Marine Corps innovation is offering the perfect middle ground: letters from home are downloaded, printed and delivered in hard-copy format, usually within 24 hours rather than the week or more it takes traditional "snail mail" to arrive.

MotoMail, short for "motivational mail," is the Marine Corp's answer to express mail for deployed Marines, Master Sgt. Ronald C. Williams, postal affairs chief for Headquarters Marine Corps, told the American Forces Press Service. It brings the speed of electronic transmissions to deployed troops, even those without easy access to computers or unable to wait in long lines to use one at an Internet café, he said. At the same time, it gives them the satisfaction of a permanent note they can hold in their hands.

The service, introduced more than a year ago and steadily growing in usage, is based on the British armed forces system called "E-Bluey" used to send free messages to British troops around the world for the past five years, Williams said.

MotoMail enables friends and families with Internet access to send up to five free, letter-type messages a day to deployed Marines with total privacy, he said. Many members of other services co-located with deployed Marines also have access to the service.

Writers register on the MotoMail Web site and type out their message and the name and unit address of the intended recipient. All units participating in the program are listed in the drop-down menu on the screen. The letter goes to the MotoMail server, which forwards it to the designated postal unit. There, Marine postal workers download the messages, print them and run them through a machine that folds and seals them to ensure privacy. Marines receive their MotoMail letters at their next mail call.

While far speedier than traditional U.S. mail, and more personal than electronic transmissions, MotoMail comes with some limitations, Williams

said. It can't send attachments or enclosures, can't relay packages and can't be used for letters addressed to "Any Marine." Messages must have a real Marine's name and unit address to be processed, Williams said. Messages with fake or incomplete names won't be delivered.

More than a year since it was introduced, MotoMail is gaining in popularity, with 106,000 active accounts delivering almost 8,000 messages to date at the rate of about 160 letters a day, he said. Deployed Marines and their families have rave reviews for the system and see it as a big morale booster. "We are so grateful to have such an amazing service made available," wrote one user on the MotoMail Web site. "It brings us much comfort to know that letters can reach our loved ones in such a timely fashion. Much thanks to those who made this possible."

### **TO SEND A LETTER THROUGH MOTOMAIL**

MotoMail is only available for sending letters to personnel stationed in Iraq or Afghanistan. It cannot be delivered to a non-Marine address and is not available yet on Navy ships. Log onto [www.motomail.us](http://www.motomail.us) and create a password. The service member's unit address (not his/her location) needs to be added to the address book on the website. Then, type your letter and send. For more information, call 877.763.2542.

### **MAKE SURE YOU USE THE CORRECT MAILING ADDRESS!**

It is very important that you use the exact mailing address for both regular mail and for MotoMail. Do not use the name of the country (for instance, IRAQ) or any other information.

#### **Command Element (CE) deployed address:**

Rank Last Name Initials  
I MEF (Section)  
UIC 42510  
FPO AP 96426-2510

Example: Sgt Smith, J. S.

I MEF G-4

UIC 42510

FPO AP 96426-2510

#### **Headquarters Group (MHG) deployed address:**

Rank Last Name, Initials  
I MHG (Section)  
UIC 42540  
FPO AP 96426-2540

Example: Sgt Smith, J.S.

I MHG Motor T

UIC 42540

FPO AP 96426-2540

## **\$AVING\$ DEPOSIT PROGRAM (\$DP) FOR COMBAT ZONE DUTY**

### **WHAT IS THE SAVINGS DEPOSIT PROGRAM (SDP)?**

The Savings Deposit Program (SDP) was established to provide members of the Uniformed Services a place to deposit money for savings purposes. Unlike the Thrift Savings Plan, SDP is available only to those serving in designated combat zones. SDP allows military members deployed in combat zones to deposit all or part of their unallotted pay into a DOD savings account up to \$10,000.00. Interest accrues on the account at an annual rate of 10% (per Executive Order 11298) and compounds quarterly. Although Federal income earned in hazardous duty zones is tax-free, interest accrued on earnings deposited into the SDP is taxable. Members can designate the allotment amount in five-dollar increments (e.g. \$115, not \$113).

**WHO IS ELIGIBLE?** Service members must be receiving Hostile Fire/Imminent Danger Pay (HFP/IDP) and serving in a designated combat zone or in direct support of a combat zone for more than 30 consecutive days or for at least one day for each of three consecutive months. Currently all the countries involved in Operation Enduring Freedom/Iraqi Freedom are designated SDP areas – included Iraq, Afghanistan and virtually the entire Persian Gulf region.

**HOW ARE DEPOSITS MADE?** Service members use the program by making deposits with their servicing finance battalion. Service members may begin making deposits on their 31st consecutive day in the designated area. Eligibility to make deposits terminates on the date of departure from theater. Active duty members may make deposits by cash, personal check, traveler's check, money order or allotment. Reserve component members may make deposits by cash, personal check or money order only. Standing policies regarding personal check acceptance and regulatory restrictions regarding number and type of allotments apply.

**CAN A SERVICE MEMBER DESIGNATE SOMEONE ELSE TO MAKE A DEPOSIT?** Yes. An agent may make a deposit using a *special power of attorney*. The special power of attorney must reflect the action the agent is attempting (e.g. if starting a SDP allotment must give authority to start, stop or change allotments; if depositing cash, traveler's check or money order must give authority to receive Treasury checks and/or make deposits). Agents may not deposit personal checks on behalf of a service member. The Enclosure provided is for that purpose.

**HOW DOES INTEREST ACCRUE?** Deposited funds will accrue interest at 10% per annum, compounded

quarterly, based on calendar year. Interest only accrues on amounts up to \$10,000 (principal and accrued interest combined). Eligibility for SDP stops on the day of departure; however, interest will continue to accrue up to 90 days after redeployment. If the service member requests withdrawal of funds prior to the 90th day, interest stops on date of request. Since the IRS considers SDP interest unearned income the interest is taxable even though the soldier is located in a combat zone tax exempt (CZTE) area.

**HOW ARE WITHDRAWALS MADE?** Deposits may be discontinued at any time. Generally, withdrawals may only be made upon termination of eligibility for the program. Withdrawals of this type must be for the entire sum of the deposit account. Defense Finance & Accounting Service (DFAS) will post the SDP balance of active component members to their Leave and Earnings Statement (LES). To receive funds, mail or fax a written request to the address below. Include the following: name, social security number, branch of service, component (e.g. active or reserve), start and stop date of tour in eligible area, and amount requested. Active duty members will automatically receive their payment via electronic funds transfer (EFT) to the same account as their normal monthly pay.

Questions regarding SDP withdrawal requests should be directed to the following phone number: Toll Free (stateside only) 1-800-624-7368. Please contact your local Legal Assistance Office for legal advice. CMC (Code JAL) may be reached at (703) 614-1266 or at [HQMCLegal@HQMC.USMC.MIL](mailto:HQMCLegal@HQMC.USMC.MIL)

## **UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF THE RED CROSS & THE KV**

Families may contact the American Red Cross (ARC) for assistance. The ARC has a network of over 2,900 chapters, 270 of them on military installations around the world. However, the ARC does not grant emergency leave requests. That is the responsibility of the commanding officer. Emergency messages are sent by the Red Cross based on a Doctor's Interpretive Statement (DIS). Once the DIS is verified, a message is sent to the service member's command. There can be delays in receiving a response based on where the message is going. The spouse or KV cannot verify an emergency. This is another reason to be prepared before the deployment.

**MILITARY DEPENDENTS MAY BE ABLE TO  
ESCORT THEIR SERVICE MEMBER  
THROUGH AIRPORT SECURITY AND TO  
GATES**

Non-traveling military dependents may be given a pass to access the sterile concourse. All individuals requesting an escort pass must be cleared through airport security. Military family members may be given a pass to escort a military passenger to the gate or to meet a military passenger's inbound arrival at the gate. Contact the airline to get specific details on the passes.

**CARE PACKAGE INFORMATION**

Some Marines (and sailors) like to receive boxes of their favorite cereal and packages of Ramen. Cup-of-Soup, instant flavored coffees and hot cocoa mix are good because of cool evening temperatures in the desert.

Chocolate, other soft candies, and homemade cookies, usually do not survive the 3- 4 weeks (or even longer) that it may take to be received. Desert temperatures typically exceed 100 degrees. Favorite purchased cookies (due to preservatives) will probably survive IF you package them carefully, otherwise, they may also be cookie crumbs instead of cookies when they reach their destination. Don't even think about sending beer and other alcoholic products.

Space is limited and what is packed in must be packed out. Don't send bulky gifts or electronics. Consumables such as toiletries and snacks are best as are videos, phone calling cards, and writing materials.

Got a Birthday, an Anniversary, or other special occasion coming up during the deployment? Layaway his/her favorite gifts each payday (keep receipts in case of returns or resizing). Plan a family celebration of all the holidays you've missed together. Set aside one day for each holiday after he/she returns.



**MAILING TIPS FOR CARE PACKAGES**

***UPS will not accept packages addressed to FPO addresses! Use the U.S Post Office (USPS! )***

The USPS offers free boxes with preprinted custom labels with your spouse's address and your address. Call 1-800-610-8734. Choose prompt number 1, then type your phone number. You will be transferred to a real person. Just ask for free boxes for U S military overseas. They will be delivered to you within 14 business days! NOTE- you still have to pay the postage on what you send, but the boxes and the preprinted labels are FREE. You can order as many as you need and can reorder at any time.

\* Packages cannot weigh more than 70 lbs & must not exceed 108 inches in combined girth (all the way around the center & length).

\* Don't use wrapping paper if you can help it & string will foul up the postal machines. The post office recommends you use reinforced, nylon strapping tape.

\* Pack everything snugly, so it doesn't move around & try to distribute the weight evenly so one side is not heavier than the other. Rolls of toilet tissue make great packing material, and are welcome items as well.

\* Select a box with room for cushioning. If cookies are not packed tightly in their containers & then well-cushioned, you might get a letter about the lovely crumbs you sent. Popcorn, sealed in small zip loc bags, makes good cushioning.

\* Remove batteries from battery powered items and pack the batteries separately. Include extra batteries in the package.

\* Put an extra address card INSIDE before you seal the package. Also put a card in the box listing all contents. If the box should be damaged & neither address on the outside can be read, it will be opened by the post office. If they can't find where it should go from the contents, then the whole package goes to the dead-letter bin.

**AN IMPORTANT NOTE**

**When you send a care package, be sure to pack an additional item or two for a single Marine or Sailor. They may not have someone as wonderful as you to send them those cards, letters, gifts, and mementos that mean so much.**



## FROM THE SERGEANT MAJOR

Greetings Marine Families!

I enjoyed meeting some of you at our recent pre deployment briefs and the Christmas party in December. I wish to convey to all family members that your Marine is being led by a very professional team of Officers, Staff Non-commissioned Officers and Non-commissioned Officers. We are also fortunate to have some of the toughest and most patriotic Lance Corporals, PFCs, and Privates within the ranks! This same dedication is also found within our Naval warriors assigned with us. We have a solid team in place.

Our "Leaders of Marines" are very experienced and are totally dedicated to providing the best possible leadership to our Marines during this upcoming deployment. All are working to ensure that we are trained, equipped, and ready for our mission in Iraq. I sincerely appreciate your patience, solid support, and understanding during these busy weeks. We certainly could not do it without you.

Some of our Marines have already deployed to Iraq in preparation for our follow-on units. Others are working long hours in support of this effort. Also, on a daily basis, we receive new Marines from around the country and some from overseas. Many of these Marines have opted to have their families remain in place as they are augmenting a critical billet in the IMEF. Let's not forget about their families and make an effort to keep all of our families informed and connected during the deployment.

I would encourage all families to get connected with our superb Key Volunteer Network. Our unit is very fortunate to have Key Volunteers with immense amounts of experience who can put you in touch with many agencies and resources. MCCS OneSource is also a valuable resource. I am confident that this deployment experience will be a positive one and bring about many new friendships. I encourage all to get involved and make an effort to recruit new volunteers.

Lastly, please feel free to contact me if I can be of assistance to any of you as we embark on our mission in Iraq.

Semper Fidelis,  
Neil O'Connell  
MHG Sergeant Major

## THE CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

DON'T COUNT ON ME FOR ANYTHING!

I said I would be gone before I wrote another article -- yet here I am. True, when you read it I will probably be gone. I was supposed to turn in this article last week -- but didn't. Don't count on me for anything. Why? I'll take responsibility -- I am about to deploy.

The time before deployment is full of expectations. Many of these will not be met. We want all the arrangements for how the home will function to be perfected. We have projects to complete. We want to be sure we have everything packed that we might need. We want our "final moments" to be perfect. But often they are not. There is too much to do, too much pressure to be perfect. I can't do it all. And neither can you. Don't count on us for anything. It turns out we are human like everyone else.

But count on this: The importance of our mission, and my love for you.

Our mission: We are doing important work. The world, not just our nation and families, is counting on us to do our best to free the Iraqis to govern their land. This mission includes important, dangerous tasks, but also will probably include some fun times with friends and colleagues. That's not only okay -- it's necessary. We can't live over there for a year without establishing some level of normalcy. You here at home will have to do the same, and no one should feel bad about it.

"My love for you": Imperfect as we are, we can always take a step back and remember what is important. Know that whatever may occur during these final moments, it is probably an attempt to express deep-felt concern and love. May not always be apparent. Let's give each other a little space, and the benefit of the doubt. Count on my love for you. There is no greater love than that of one who gives his life's efforts for another.

God's blessings,  
Chaplain Smith

## FREE EYEGLASSES FOR MILITARY DEPENDENTS

Operation Clear Vision, a non-profit organization, wants to help enlisted Marine dependents get free glasses. The glasses are available through the Lion's Club Sight Clinic, which is located in Balboa Park. The Point Of Contact at the clinic is Marsha at (619) 298-5273. Parents should call first before bringing in their children's prescriptions for free glasses.



**FAMILY READINESS OFFICER**  
**(760) 763-4785**

**I MEF HEADQUARTERS GROUP (I MHG)**

**KVN**

**KV Advisor Delilah Ward**

**KV Coordinator Vacant**

**KVs (by shop)**

Adjutant/BEQ/Comptroller	Lori Barnes
Medical	Susan Winters
GPAC	Sara Choate
S-3	Jennifer Saurer
Supply	Kim Matus
S-4/Armory/Field Mess	Brandi Goskie
Motor T/Engineers	Barbara Cook/ Kim Balderaz
Truck Company	Caren Kyle

**G-10 BRIDGE TEAM**

**KV Advisor Bettye Greenwood**

**KV Rep Kayleen Donnelly**

**G-10 Staff Sabra Edwards**

**MTT/BTT/SPTTS**

**KV Rep Kim Bilas, Kim Pugsley, &  
Victoria Carlborg**

**KVs (By Unit)**

G-10 MITT 1	Toni Lacy
G-10 MITT 2	Jodi Bottoms
G-10 BTT	Juli Foster
G-10 SPTT 1	Diane Puma
G-10 SPTT 2	Debbie Quinn

**COMMAND ELEMENT**

**KVN**

**KV Advisors Virginia Sattler & D'Arcy Neller**

**KV Coordinator Deanne Graler**

**KVs (by shop)**

G-1	Chantelle Bartch
G-2	Kathleen Devlin
G-3	Rosa E. Garcia
	Faith Atkinson
	Joni Bown
	Lisa Winand
G-4	Sarah Dalke
	Sabina Killion
G-5	Cindi Slattery
G-6	Mary Griggs
	Marie Bruno
	Tiffany Trevino
	Catherine Moses
G-7	Mary Spencer
	Lori Burton
G-8	Vacant
G-9	Vacant
Staff Secretary	Candy Diosdado
PAO/SJA	Jessica Cordero
Comptroller	Maria Evans

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

Name & Rank of spouse \_\_\_\_\_ SS# \_\_\_\_\_

UNIT and Unit Address \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Next of Kin in the U.S. \_\_\_\_\_

Address & Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Children's Names, School/Daycare, & Person Designated to take  
temporary custody in case of parent's death or hospitalization:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Special instructions for Pets or other household matters:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Key Volunteer's Name & Phone # \_\_\_\_\_